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ABSTRACT

An overview is provided of Hagerstown Junior College's (HJC's) efforts to redefine and redirect the college's mission. First, introductory material places HJC's mission development project within the context of other leadership challenges for the 1990's. Next, a strategic planning process focusing on mission redefinition is explained, highlighting the following elements: (1) the use of a situation analysis wheel to blend elements of mission with aspects of future orientation and daily decision-making techniques; (2) the use of gap analysis to compare the action agenda with the operational plan of the college as a means of increasing acceptance within the campus community and insuring reliability; and (3) the formation of an educational charrette of community members to react to the action agenda, synthesize reactions into a series of recommendations, and integrate the recommendations into the college's action plan. The next sections focus on an innovation model involving two phases: idea generation and the determination of technical feasibility. The action strategies proposed by the planning charrette are appended. (EJV)

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"...RUNNING TWICE AS FAST...":

A CHARRETTE RESPONSE TO THE CHANGING MISSION OF THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Forum 110

67th Annual Convention

AACJC

Dallas, Texas

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Introduction

On February 2, 1987, John W. Gardner, a prominent leadership theorist, delivered the second annual Harry S. Truman lecture inaugurating National Community College month. He discussed the tasks of leadership facing community colleges as we prepare for the 1990's. One of his insights is particularly relevant to our changing mission. "A community lives in the minds of its members--in shared assumptions, beliefs, customs; ideas that give meaning, ideas that motivate." Communities that remain vital do so through a "powerful process of regeneration. Each [constituency] must rediscover the living elements in its own tradition and adapt them to present realities."[1] Fostering the process of rediscovery is a major challenge of leadership facing community colleges.

Gardner's insight is valid; how can it be made operational? Roueche and Baker in their monograph Access and Excellence: The Open-Door College quote President Robert McCabe of Miami Dade Community College. "My first place to look is the future. . . . If I designed an educational program for today, it would not be any good. You have to design educational programs for what the surrounding community is going to be in the future--five, ten years from now."[2] The integration of mission redefinition and future orientation is a logical, productive strategy for engaging the challenges of the 1990's.

Mission Redefinition

While this conceptual framework is attractive, it does not provide a process for implementation. Caruthers and Lott at the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems developed a strategic planning approach focusing on mission redefinition.

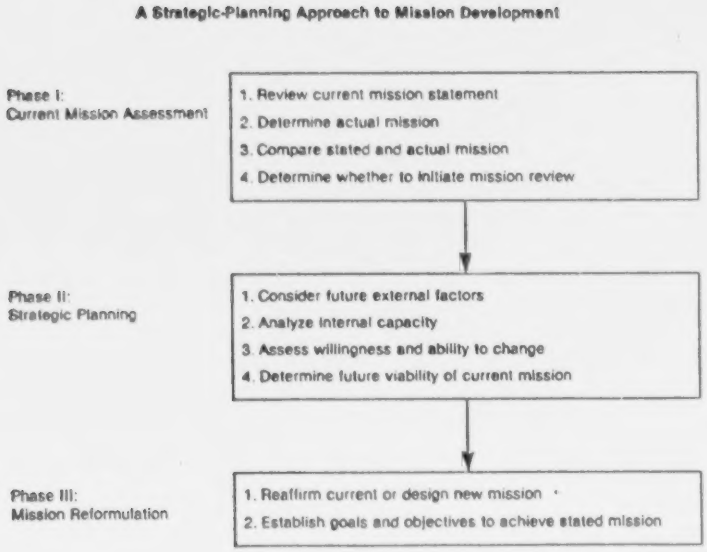
A Strategic-Planning Approach to Mission Development
Phase I:
Current Mission Assessment
1. Review current mission statement
2. Determine actual mission
3. Compare stated and actual mission
4. Determine whether to initiate mission review
Phase II:
Strategic Planning
1. Consider future external factors
2. Analyze internal capacity
3. Assess willingness and ability to change
4. Determine future viability of current mission
Phase III:
Mission Reformulation
1. Reaffirm current or design new mission
2. Establish goals and objectives to achieve stated mission

Figure 1

The approach is three phased. First, the existing mission is evaluated. "Does the institution really do the things that the statement suggests? . . . Are there important. . .activities that are not addressed?" If the existing statement ". . .cannot pass a reality check, the time has come to consider a new statement."[3]

Hagerstown Junior College began the second phase of mission redefinition in January 1986. A multi-disciplinary team including college faculty and staff, business representatives, agency personnel, and citizen spokespersons developed a questionnaire designed to assess the validity of the existing college mission. The instrument was mailed to 580 businesses, industries, and agencies in the college's service area. Three hundred eighty-two, or 66%, responded. The results suggested that the college's mission statement should be revised. The multi-disciplinary team decided that further assessment was required before a revised mission statement could be developed.

Situation Analysis Wheel

A component of the college's existing strategic planning process provided structure for the assessment. The situation analysis wheel allowed the team to blend elements of mission with aspects of future orientation and daily decision making techniques.[4] The result was an action agenda designed to

SITUATION ANALYSIS WHEEL

Figure 2

involve the community in the mission redefinition process. Following the development of the action agenda, members of the college staff used the agenda to conduct a "reality testing" activity within the institution.

Gap Analysis

The preceding initiatives tended to be somewhat theoretical. To increase acceptance within the campus community and to insure reliability, the process

of gap analysis was used to compare the action agenda with the operational plan of the college.

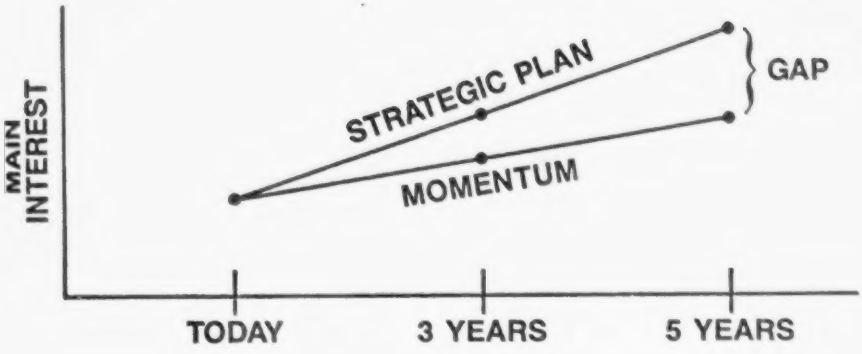

Figure 3

Below, et.al. suggest that gap analysis is a simple but effective way to identify whether a dichotomy exists between theory and practice.[5] The operational plan of the college was compared with the newly developed action agenda. The result was a gap which, when projected over five years, indicated that the college could not hope to realize its primary objectives. The gap analysis reinforced the need for mission redefinition and validated the action agenda.

An Educational Charrette

Successful mission redefinition and redirection require the integration of internal forces promoting change and external community factors reinforcing its importance. The planning charrette approach had been used successfully in the college's service area previously. The strategy may be defined as "an intensive, outcomes-oriented process used to study needs within the total community."[6] The technique is based on community group and citizen reaction

to the action agenda, synthesis of the reaction into a series of recommendations, and the integration of the recommendations with the college's strategic plan. Once the integration has taken place, implementation begins with the design of a revised mission statement.

The Process of Innovation

By early summer 1986 the integration process was under way. The multi-disciplinary team submitted their recommendations to college personnel with the understanding that the implementation phase would be initiated. A problem emerged--no model existed to guide the process.

A member of the college staff who served on the multi-disciplinary team spent part of the summer of 1986 completing a doctoral internship with the U.S. Department of Commerce in the Office of Productivity, Technology, and Innovation. This agency was in the process of pilot testing a three-stage model designed to foster innovation.[7]

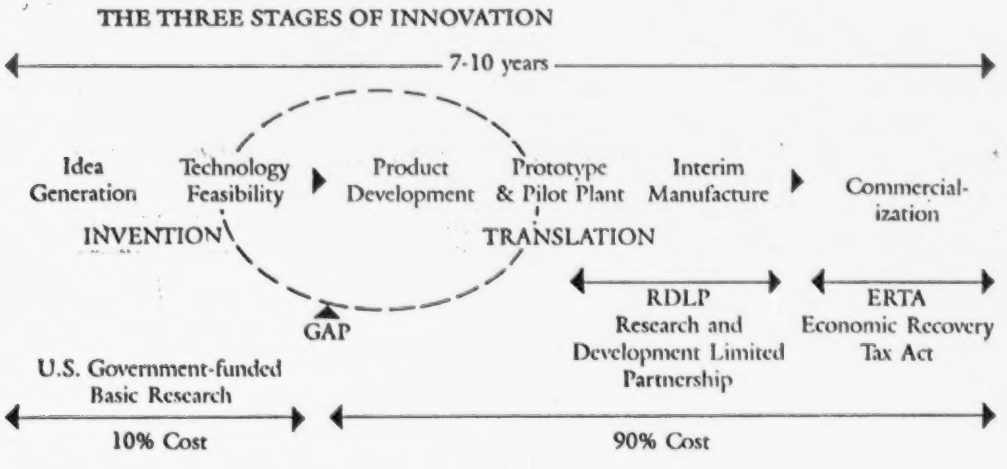

Figure 4

The staff member proposed that the model be used at the college to implement mission redefinition. A preliminary meeting was held with staff from the PTI office to assess the congruence between the college's need and the model. The result was mutual agreement that the model could be applied. College staff initiated the application in the fall of 1986.

Project Outcomes

The innovation model divides the first phase into two processes: idea generation and the determination of technical feasibility. Both processes impact directly upon mission redefinition. The first recommendation (see Appendix) emanating from the charrette suggests the need for a "coordinating council" within the college's service area to identify needs, set priorities, and determine the feasibility of new program initiatives. This organization was formed in late 1986. It is already involved in validating changes proposed by the college.

The most significant element in redefining mission is the development of an advanced technology center on the college campus. The need for access to training and education in advanced technology was identified through the charrette and validated in a two-part survey of manufacturers conducted in the winter of 1986-87.

The college's gymnasium will be replaced with an athletic/recreation center and the old structure will be renovated to house CADD/CAM, CNC machining, automated materials handling, and industrial controls laboratories. Specially designed contract training, short-term skill development, and certificate and associate degree programs will share these facilities. The new mission of the college includes responsibility for functioning as the technology transfer agency for a tri-state region.

Charrette action strategies also identified the importance of lifelong learning and comprehensive cultural literacy. These strategies require access to a career ladder including bachelor's and master's degree programs. Involvement of several groups who participated in the charrette is bringing these strategies to fruition. The legislative delegation representing the college's service area, the Appalachian Regional Commission, and the local cable television company each made a contribution.

A microwave link between the University of Maryland, College Park; the University of Maryland, Baltimore County; and Hagerstown Junior College provides primary access to advanced education.

A supplemental grant from the ARC helped to expand the microwave network and provided a satellite downlink. The college is now capable of receiving satellite broadcasts from the National Technological University and participating in a variety of teleconferences.

Finally, the cable company provides an access channel which the college uses to broadcast credit courses and public information material. These technologies are important in realizing the mission of serving nontraditional clients in innovative ways.

The action agenda included proposals for systematic resource development, implementation of outcomes assessment, and increased student involvement in the "real world" through internships, field placements, and cooperative education experiences. These strategies produced a revision of the college's planning cycle. All occupational programs have been revised to increase

THE PLANNING CYCLE

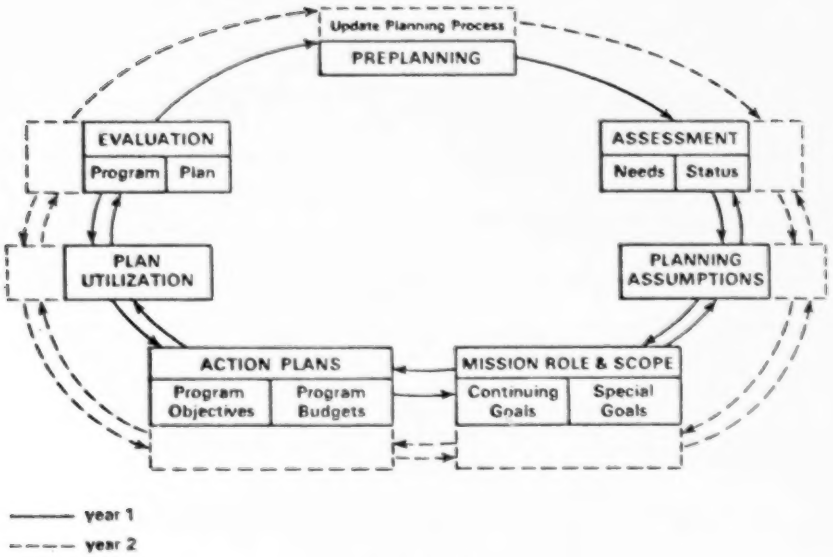

Figure 5

general education by one-third; student outcome statements have been written for all programs, transfer and occupational; and a new catalog is being published, one year ahead of schedule, to capture the changes. Finally, a comprehensive resource development drive has been initiated seeking to involve all sectors of the community in the changing mission of the college. The purpose of these actions is to integrate the elements of the redefined mission, focus new delivery systems directly upon the changing needs of the college's service area and bring the second phase of the innovation model--translation--into operation. The result will be readiness to engage the specific challenges of the 1990's.

Conclusion

The School of Technical Careers, Southern Illinois University, has been a major source of technology transfer for over a decade. Recent research released by the school details the role to be played by education as a technology transfer agent. "[We] can fulfill four functions. . . : selection, socialization, orientation and preparation."[8] In areas seeking to improve employment opportunities and overcome technological stagnation these functions are essential. The process requires careful planning, management, and evaluation. This design is an effective summary of the new mission of the

Figure 6

community college. Miller and Sharma are succinct: "Thus, higher education is a vital link between [the research environment] and business. It acts as a conduit between two major institutional frameworks, each learning from the other, and each making its appropriate contribution to the field of technology development."[9] As agent, broker, and facilitator, the community college of the 1990's is an integral part of the process of societal change. As Gardner suggested in his Truman lecture, "In a pluralistic society change and conflict are necessary [but] leaders must strive . . . to achieve workable unity."[10] We must be those leaders; heed well the admonition of the Red Queen in Alice in Wonderland: "A queer sort of country, this . . . it takes all the running you can do to keep in the same place. If you want to get somewhere else, you must run at least twice as fast as that!"

CHARRETTE ACTION STRATEGIES

Introduction

The purpose of the recently completed planning charrette was to identify a series of action strategies that can be implemented to improve the effectiveness of the educational delivery systems of Hagerstown Junior College and the Washington County Board of Education. Further, the action strategies are designed to increase the congruence between the needs of business/industry and the competencies held by secondary and post-secondary program graduates. Finally, the action strategies represent education's contribution to the process of improving the county's workforce as a part of a comprehensive economic development endeavor.

Strategies

The results of the planning charrette were a series of insights into the needs of business/industry in the areas of employee competencies, training/skill upgrading, and economic development. The Local Advisory Council, sponsor of the charrette, considers the results to be positive; the following strategies are designed to insure that the needs of business/industry will be matched by changes in the services provided and delivery system used by the county's educational system.

1. The Local Advisory Council for Career and Vocational Education will cooperate with the Chamber of Commerce, the Washington County Economic Development Commission, and various elected bodies in Washington County to develop a coordinating council which will be responsible for resource development, program prioritization, and communication regarding the changing economic environment of Washington County.

2. The Local Advisory Council (LAC) will re-activate TRED (Training Resources for Economic Development). The body will serve as the LAC's needs sensing agent and will contribute to the LAC's comprehensive planning effort.

3. A characteristic common to all aspects of learning in the last years of the twentieth century is that the process must be life-long. From the perspective of the LAC, all students must be prepared for life-long learning. Therefore, all curricula offered by the Washington County Board of Education and Hagerstown Junior College must contain a career development/career exploration module. The purpose of the module will be to assist students in understanding the process of entering the workforce, exiting to return to school for training/skill upgrading, and re-entering the workforce.

4. To ensure that secondary and post-secondary students are aware of the dimensions of careers and career choices, the LAC will provide teams of "career professionals" to visit all county high and middle schools as well as the College to present "real world" career information to students. Further, these teams will work with secondary and post-secondary counselors and teachers to develop and deliver career planning and selection instruction.

5. A comprehensive assessment of all programs offered by the secondary and post-secondary educational system in the county reveals that "real world" skills and knowledge are underemphasized. Therefore, it is the LAC's position that all programs offered by both systems must

contain a field-work component. The component will consist of a field placement, internship, or cooperative education experience.

6. The cost of occupational education to students has increased along with rapid technological change. Therefore, it is important that students not avoid occupational programs because of high costs. Representatives from the LAC, educational agencies, and the coordinating council will serve as a resource development body to provide financial awards for students who enter occupational programs. Awards at the secondary level may include tools, supplemental texts, and computer software. At the post-secondary level, awards may be used for tuition, fees, texts, and other program-related costs.
7. Employers must be convinced that graduates from secondary and post-secondary occupational programs are competent in job-related and interpersonal skills. Therefore, the LAC is committed to a process whereby all secondary and post-secondary students must be tested to determine proficiency in the core occupational-skill areas and the survival skill areas of reading, mathematics, science, computer literacy, and written and oral communication before certification for graduation.
8. Comprehensive cultural literacy has emerged as an essential survival skill in periods of rapid and profound change. Therefore, from the LAC's perspective, all secondary and post-secondary students must receive a broad-based introduction to the humanities and sciences as a preparation for life and life-long learning.
9. Recruitment of students for occupational programs is, in part, the responsibility of the educational agencies. However, employers have

the most comprehensive insight into the opportunities available in their fields. Therefore, they must initiate marketing efforts which will present the merits of the careers available in their employment areas to students and their parents. The LAC, Hagerstown Junior College, and the Washington County Board of Education will work with employers to disseminate information about jobs and work opportunities in Washington County.

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